

PROPERTY PLANNING COMMON ELEMENTS

COMPONENTS OF MASTER PLANS

RECREATION ACTIVITIES AND THEIR MANAGEMENT

Horseback Riding

Desired Experiences and Site Selection Considerations

Horseback riding in Wisconsin occurs on public lands and privately-owned, stables, farms and ranches. Riders need to have a basic understanding of how to handle a horse to safely participate in the activity. Trail riding is most common, with a recent study showing that three-quarters of equine owners use their animals for trail riding or recreation. Trail riding trips typically involve significant effort and planning to transport horse(s) to the destination along with supplies and equipment. As a result, multi-day trips are common and access to camping areas or similar accommodations are important for horseback riders. Riders also typically want to be away from population centers and areas with high activity levels to minimize chances that their horses are inadvertently startled. Truck-trailer combinations need larger parking accommodations and loading areas. Drinking water, tie posts/rails and manure disposal areas are also key components to a usable equine recreation area.

Varied forested terrain where riders can challenge their horses and enjoy the landscape, are most desirable. Water features can be helpful for providing water to animals without having to return to base-camp. Riding horses affords trail users a greater range of distances. Generally, trail lengths composed of 15 or more miles of trails make a destination worth the travel. Trails can be technical with a 2-4-foot width of native material, but a cleared height of about 12 feet and width of about 8 feet are needed.

Wisconsin also has an active Endurance Ride program where riders will compete over 10, 25 or 50 miles in a day.

Camaraderie among riders is a key factor in the activity's popularity. Group rides are more common than solo riding. In some cases, there can be issues where hiking and biking occur on the same trails and can startle horses that in turn cause problems with riders. This can often be remedied through signage and education. Sharing of trails provides opportunities for different user groups to interact and better understand each other's needs.

With the weight of the animal, the likelihood for disturbance to a trail's surface exists. If trails are not sustainably designed, this disturbance can lead to erosion and rutting in the trail. Depending on the horse's diet and where it has been recently, there is a potential for spreading invasive plant species.

Notable Differences in Participation or Opportunities Across the State

Riding occurs across the state but is more popular in the following regions: Northwoods, Upper Lake Michigan Coastal, Mississippi River Corridor and Lake Winnebago Waters.

Notable Times of the Year of High or Low Participation

The most common times of year include spring and fall when temperatures are cooler for the horses and there are fewer problems with biting insects. Use typically ebbs in the summer when higher temperatures affect both horses and riders. Winter riding occurs but is less popular, especially longer rides.



Participation

Participation Rate and Frequency

Based on a 2016 survey of Wisconsin residents conducted for the development of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), it is estimated that 7% of adult Wisconsin residents participate in horseback riding on trails, which ranked #55 out of 64 activities evaluated.

| Days/year | % of Horseback Riders |
|--------------|-----------------------|
| 1 to 2 | 55 |
| 3 to 9 | 22 |
| 10 to 29 | 13 |
| 30 or more | 11 |
| Total | 100% |

In terms of frequency, participants that engaged in horseback riding did so a little less frequently than participants in most other activities (it ranked #49 in frequency out of 64 activities evaluated).

Estimated Trends

Horseback riding is predicted to remain static or see a slight decline. One national study predicts a 2% increase by 2030 due to increased income (White et al. 2016). Another participation study predicts future decline in equine activities as the population of horse owners ages. This study showed horse ownership among those under 54 years old, declining since 2006, with the 35-44-year-old age group taking a large decline, from below 30% in 2006 to below 15% in 2013 (Brakke Consulting, Inc. 2014).

Demographics

As can be seen from the SCORP survey results in the table below, while participants in horseback riding in Wisconsin tend to be young, there is a sizable group in their 50s. Participants tend to be more rural and about evenly split by gender.

| Demographic Category | Demographic Group | % Participation Rate Within Demographic Category | % Composition of Demographic Category (sums to 100%) |
|----------------------|-------------------|--|--|
| Age | 18-29 | 14 | 44 |
| | 30-39 | 5 | 13 |
| | 40-49 | 6 | 13 |
| | 50-59 | 6 | 17 |
| | 60-69 | 5 | 13 |
| | 70 and older | 1 | 1 |
| | Total | -- | 100 |
| Gender | Female | 7 | 51 |
| | Male | 7 | 49 |
| | Total | -- | 100 |
| Residence | Rural | 7 | 54 |
| | Urban | 6 | 46 |
| | Total | -- | 100 |



References

- Brakke Consulting, Inc. 2014. *Equine Market Mega Study*. Cited in Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association (JAVMA) News, April 15, 2014. <https://www.avma.org/News/JAVMANews/Pages/140415g.aspx>
- White, E.M., J.M. Bowker, A.E. Askew, L.L. Langner, J.R. Arnold, and D.B.K. English. 2016. *Federal Outdoor Recreation Trends: Effects on Economic Opportunities*. United States Department of Agriculture.

